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# Swiss+Tech Utili-Key 6-in-1 Key Ring Tool

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Folders -



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## **Description :**

Small keychain multitool review.

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### Introduction



While it'd be nice to have a set of tools with us all the time it simply isn't practical for most of us. That's where the multi-tools generally come in. They're handy, compact and pretty easy to tote around. There are occasions though where even they can be inconvenient or at least not readily at hand. Its times like these that a key ring tool can be a godsend.

Two years ago at Christmas I got a neat little stocking stuffer from my wife in the form of a Utili-Key, 6-in-1 Key Ring Tool from Swiss+Tech. The Utili-Key is no larger than a typical car key but still manages to pack in some basic tools including the good old Phillips screwdriver and a small knife blade. The Utili-Key was designed back in 1997 by Larry Legg, a machinist from Ohio, and is said to be the "the smallest, most compact multiple tool ever developed" according to the Swiss+Tech website.

### Packaging and Description

The Utili-Key comes packaged in a typical retail plastic bubble package that lets you see the tool from the front and shows you the 6 functions of it on the rear. On the inside of the packaging is a warning stating that the Utili-Key features a razor sharp knife and basically says not to cut yourself with it. Swiss-Tech's lifetime replacement warranty is spelled out on the inside of the cardboard packaging insert as well. It states "Your Swiss+Tech tool is warranted against any defects in materials or workmanship for the life of the user. Although Swiss+Tech uses the finest in scientific surface coatings to extend the tool life and appearance, such coatings are subject to normal wear and are not part of the lifetime replacement warranty". Basically that seems to translate to "if it breaks send it back but if it just starts getting grubby looking or eventually rusts then deal with it". That's pretty typical for most knives and tools of this sort. Keep in mind that stainless steel is very rust resistant, not rust proof. I've managed to rust a few top quality stainless knives and multi-tools in the past so it can happen.

After you get done reading the provided literature (that'll take about 45 seconds) you can get to playing with the tool itself. The size of the Utili-Key is 2 3/4" x 3/4" x 1/8" and it weighs only 0.5 oz. You really can't get much smaller than that and still have a usable device in my opinion. At least not any thinner anyway! It's slightly bigger than a standard house key but still smaller than my General Motors SUV key. You could very easily snap the Utili-Key onto your key ring and forget about it until you needed it. I know I did!



As you can see in the above pics the Utili-Key is quite small in comparison to a standard Swiss Army Knife and even compared to the petite Leatherman Micra. While the Key is slightly longer than the Micra it is considerably thinner.



The 6 tools featured in that trim package are:

· Knife Blade · Serrated Cutting Surface · Micro-Sized Phillips Screw Driver · Eyeglass Screw Driver · #1 Flat Screw Driver · Bottle Opener

Let's take a look at how well these tools work in reality.

## Hands On Testing

I've been carrying the Utili-Key around for about two years now on my key ring. It simply snaps onto the ring and is removed again by grasping either side of the tool and prying it apart. It's stiff enough to remain closed and secure when on the ring but not so stiff that it's a problem getting the Key off when you need it. That's a bonus if you've ever used other tools that remain attached to the key ring while in use. Invariably your keys end up getting in the way and making a simple task more awkward than it needs to be. By easily snapping on and off the ring without the need to be threaded into place the Utili-Key avoids the hassle of getting tangled up with keys and other junk when you need it. The weight is imperceptible. Think adding another house key to your ring and you've just grasped what it's like to carry the Key with you every day. It truly is no burden in either weight or convenience to have the Swiss+Tech tool on your person. I take my keys with me all the time anyway so I don't even have to remember to add something else to my pocket, backpack etc.

## Swiss+Tech Utili-Key 6-in-1 Key Ring Tool

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When it comes to actual practical usage the Utili-Key varies. I'd be lying if I said it was as good as a regular knife, screwdriver etc. but that's not the point of it. The point is it being there when you need it and nothing else is handy. The blade works well for opening boxes and packages and cutting things like cord or plastic packing bands. The flat head screwdrivers are also pretty easy to use although don't expect to get too much torque out of them to break loose really tough screws. The smallest flathead is a good fit for tightening up eye and sunglasses. The bottle opener can be a lifesaver at parties and other locations where one might chance to partake in an adult malted beverage or two, or three....

But what about the Phillips head? I used the Phillips on a fair amount of computer and electronics components and I have to say it performs "okay" but not great. Since the Key opens up into an L shape it's a little awkward to use inside tight quarters. It does work but you need to keep pulling the screwdriver out and rotating it after each turn. It will work in a pinch if you've got nothing else handy though. The biggest downside to the Utili-Key is the same as it's greatest strength: its size. The fact that it's so small makes it somewhat awkward to use at points and you find yourself wishing for more of a handle so that you could get a better grip, or bear down on a screw a little harder. That's part of the trade off in having something small enough and light enough to carry unnoticed.

## Conclusion



Despite having a veritable plethora of pocketknives and multi-tools I've actually found myself using the Utili-Key quite a bit since I've gotten it. It's been there at times when a knife or other tool wasn't practical to have on me, and seen use when it was simply handier to get to than another implement. The hardest thing was simply remembering that I had it on me when I was fumbling around looking for a bigger tool that I'd left behind! While the Swiss+Tech Utili-Key wouldn't be my first choice for general utility use, even amongst mini and micro tools, I certainly wouldn't dismiss it either. Its ultra compact format makes it a great back up, even to your regular multi-tool. The fact that it snaps onto your key ring just about assures you that you'll have some sort of tools on you even when you really have forgotten everything else. At the \$10.99 price listed on the dealer link at Swiss+Tech's website there's really no good reason not to have one of these around!